

Claims

[c1] 1. A method to remotely permit user enablement of software options resident on a medical imaging device, the method comprising the steps of:
(A) receiving a request and I.D. data from a user of a remotely located stand-alone medical imaging device seeking access to a non-enabled option resident on the device;
(B) generating an electronic enabler configured to enable the non-enabled option;
(C) transmitting the electronic enabler to the user; and
(D) providing instructions to the user to install the electronic enabler in the remotely located stand-alone medical imaging device to activate the option on the remotely located stand-alone medical imaging device.

[c2] 2. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of enabling user access to the option for a predefined period of time.

[c3] 3. The method of claim 2 further comprising the step of enabling user access to the option for a trial period of thirty days.

[c4] 4. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of transmitting the electronic enabler includes one of forwarding the electronic enabler to the user via an electronic mailing system, displaying the electronic enabler on a graphical user interface via an Internet connection, and providing the electronic enabler via a telephone system.

[c5] 5. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of granting a license to use the software for a predetermined trial period.

[c6] 6. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of transmitting a request for verification of enablement of the software to the user.

[c7] 7. The method of claim 1 wherein the enabler comprises an alphanumeric code.

[c8] 8. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of generating the electronic enabler upon user satisfaction of a set of criteria, the set of criteria including at least one of a user account, a host identifier, a device identifier, and an option identifier.

[c9] 9. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of receiving a request includes the step of receiving the request at a centralized facility via a graphical user interface accessed by the user at a workstation remote from the centralized facility.

[c10] 10. An access granting system comprising:

a stand-alone device having a data entry module and further including at least one disabled option resident in memory thereon; and

a centralized facility located remotely from the device and having at least one computer programmed to:

display a graphical user interface configured to facilitate user activation of the at least one disabled option;

receive a request to activate the disabled option from a user remote from the centralized facility;

generate an alphanumeric code; and

electronically transmit the alphanumeric code to the user, the alphanumeric code configured to activate the disabled option upon user inputting of the alphanumeric code on the data entry module of the stand-alone device.

[c11]

11. The system of claim 10 wherein the at least one computer is further programmed to either email the alphanumeric code to the user or display the alphanumeric code on the graphical user interface.

[c12]

12. The system of claim 10 wherein the alphanumeric code is further configured to activate the disabled option for a predetermined and limited time period.

[c13]

13. The system of claim 12 wherein the stand-alone device includes at least one medical imaging scanner and the alphanumeric code is configured to automatically disable the activated option upon expiration of the predetermined and limited time period.

[c14]

14. The system of claim 10 wherein the at least one computer is further programmed to: prompt the user to input a set of identifying data including a user identifier, a system identifier, a stand-alone device identifier, and a disabled option identifier; generate an electronic licensing contract; and prompt the user to either accept or decline the licensing contract.

[c15]

15. The system of claim 10 wherein the at least one computer is further programmed to electronically transmit a request for verification of activation of the disabled option to the user.

[c16]

16. The system of claim 10 wherein at least one computer is further programmed to electronically transmit an instructional manual to the user, the manual including a set of instructions for activating the disabled option.

[c17]

17. A computer data signal embodied in a carrier wave and representing a sequence of instructions which, when executed by at least one processor, causes the at least one processor to:

receive, at a centralized facility, a request to activate an option resident in memory of a remote stand-alone device from a user remote from the centralized facility;

determine whether the user is qualified, and if so:

grant access to the option resident in the remote stand-alone device for a limited time period;

generate a software key designed to allow access to the option for the limited time period;

and

send the software key to the user.

[c18]

18. The computer data signal of claim 17 wherein the sequence of instructions embodied in the carrier wave include further instructions to display the software key on a graphical user interface accessible by the user from a computer remote from the centralized facility and remote from the stand-alone device.

[c19]

19. The computer data signal of claim 17 wherein the sequence of instructions embodied in the carrier wave includes further instructions to:

receive a user identifier;

receive a system identifier;

receive an option identifier; and

generate the software key to be specific to the user, the system, and the option.

[c20]

20. The computer data signal of claim 17 wherein the device is a medical imaging scanner and the software key includes an encrypted alphanumeric code.

[c21]

21. The computer data signal of claim 20 wherein the software key is configured to activate the option upon user inputting of the alphanumeric code into memory of the device via a data entry module.

[c22]

22. A computer readable storage medium having a computer program stored thereon, the computer program having a set of instructions that when executed by a computer causes the computer to:

display a graphical user interface configured to facilitate user activation of a disabled option resident on a medical imaging device;

receive a number of user inputs from a user remote from the medical imaging device;

generate an alphanumeric code configured to activate the disabled option upon user inputting of the alphanumeric code on a data entry module of the medical imaging device; and automatically convey the alphanumeric code to the user.

[c23] 23. The computer readable storage medium of claim 22 wherein the instruction to convey the alphanumeric code includes one of emailing the alphanumeric code to the user via an electronic messaging system and displaying the alphanumeric code on the graphical user interface.

[c24] 24. The computer readable storage medium of claim 22 wherein the set of instructions further causes the computer to determine a period of delay, the period of delay representing sufficient time to allow the user to activate the disabled option.

[c25] 25. The computer readable storage medium of claim 24 wherein the set of instructions further causes the computer to automatically generate an electronic request for verification of activation and email the electronic request to the user upon expiration of the period of delay.

[c26] 26. The computer readable storage medium of claim 24 wherein the period of delay is 24 hours.